DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 067 FL 013 746

TITLE English Teaching Profile: Malawi.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English Language and Literature Div.
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Instructional Materials; Language of Instruction; Language Role; Language Teachers; Language Usage; Official Languages; *Second Language Instruction; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Malawi

ABSTRACT

The role and status of English instruction in Malawi is outlined. The role of English in Malawi as a whole, English instruction within the educational system, language teacher supply and training, and British support for English instruction in Malawi are reported. English is taught as a subject in primary school and is the language of instruction in all secondary and tertiary education. English has a high status as one of the two official languages and is the principal language of government and the media. English language performance standards are high. (RW)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: MALAWI **Date: November 1981**

1. The role and status of English

The language background In 1968 Chichewa was declared the national language of Malawi, and Chichewa and English the two official languages. Schools are not supposed to employ other vernacular languages. The 1977 census did not contain any questions about mother tongue or language competence, including a knowledge of English. Accurate figures are therefore not available. Chichewa is understood by about 80% of the population.

If literacy in English is taken as being achieved after eight years of primary education or more, the 1977 census figures indicate that 9.56% of the total population over 14 years of age are literate in English. Some usable English can be assumed after at least five years of primary education; the census figures for this are 20.35% of the total population over nine years of age. However, a very much higher percentage of the total population understand, and can communicate in, English.

English in education English is the medium of instruction in all secondary and tertiary education. It is begun as a subject in Standard 1 of the primary school, and is introduced as a medium by stages. In Standards 6-8, English is used as a medium for all subjects.

English is the essential qualification for advancement in all types of employment as well as being the gateway to the wider world of knowledge. The motivation for learning English is therefore very strong, and the Government is currently giving very strong support to measures designed to raise standards.

English in internal communication Although Chichewa is used as a lingua franca by the majority of the population, English also plays this role for the educated majority. But at all levels the medium of conversation will generally be a Malawian language except where expatriates or other indigenous language speakers are present. English is used much more frequently in letter-writing than in speech.

However, English is much more important than its limited use as a lingua franca might suggest. It is the language of administration and politics. English is compulsory in Parliament, and all MPs are required to pass a stringent English test. Ministries use English for their correspondence; laws are enacted in English, and it is the language of all but the traditional courts. English is the main language of the mass media.

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The Daily Times is printed entirely in English; the Malawi News has 14 of its 16 pages in English. About a third of all MBC broadcasts are in English, and the language predominates in business, commerce and advertising.

There is an appreciable amount of creative writing in Malawi, even when compared with East and West Africa, and the poetry is especially good. Little however gets into print.

There is a small group of older writers - Rubadiri, Kachingwe and Kayira - who publish regularly, and the Montfort Press in Blantyre, in conjunction with the University, has launched a Malawian Writers Series with published titles now covering oral literature, drama, the novel and the short story. Most new writers first surface at the University's Writers' Workshop, which meets weekly throughout the academic year.

English in external communication Malawians use English exclusively, both in writing and in speech, to communicate with the outside world.

2. **English with the Education System**

Primary The primary school course lasts eight years. English is begun as a subject at the beginning of the first term of standard 1. The first year's work is almost entirely oral, although a few pre-reading activities are introduced in the third term. Reading in Chichewa is begun at the beginning of the first year, and reading in English begins in Standard 2.

A Ministry circular of 1966 gives the official policy on the staggered introduction of English as a medium:

i. From Standard 1, inclusive, physical education should be taught as far as possible, in English.

ii. From Standard 4, inclusive, in addition to i. above, arithmetic should be taught in English.

iii. From Standard 5, inclusive, in addition to ii. above, general science and geography should be taught in English.

iv. From Standard 6, inclusive, in addition to iii. above, history, civics and all remaining subjects should be taught in English.

The number of hours per week allocated to the teaching of English is as follows:

Standard 1	:	5 x 30 minute periods
Standard 2	:	7 x 30 minute periods
Standard 3-8	:	9 x 35 minute periods

In Standard 5 the nine periods a week consist of eight English Language lessons and one English Grammar lesson. In Standards 6-8 there are six English Language Lessons and three English Grammar lessons. This is the result of the President's insistence. No formal distinction is made at this stage between English Language and English Literature.

At the end of Standard 8, pupils take the Primary Leaving Certificate Examination. The English language examination of the PSLC is in two parts. The first paper consists of a short dictation passage. The

second paper has sections on Structure, Punctuation, Comprehension, Vocabulary, Grammar and Composition. The examination is both a terminal primary-school qualification and a basis for selection for secondary school.

The English in Malawi course is the only one recommended by the Ministry for use in primary schools. The course has recently been revised to make it more traditional. The revised editions of Books 1 - 6 are in use, and Books 7 - 8 will follow in 1982. The syllabus for primary-school English closely follows the English in Malawi course. The course-books for Standards 5 - 8 do not contain any reference to English Grammar, but guidance on the teaching of grammar has been given by the Ministry in the form of a Grammar Teaching Scheme for all Standards from 5 - 8. The recommended textbook for grammar is English Grammar for Schools (Dzuka Publishing Company, Malawi).

There is now a Standard 5 external examination. Children have to pass this in order to qualify for Standard 6. In practice, however, the examination is not an obstacle in proceeding from Standard 5 to Standard 6.

The inspection of primary schools is organised at regional and district level. Malawi is divided into three regions and a Regional Education Officer is stationed at the headquarters of each region (in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu). At each regional office there is an Assistant REO (Inspection) and immediately responsible to him are District Inspectors of Schools, who inspect all subjects. There is no special provision for Inspectors of English at primary level.

Secondary The secondary-school course in Malawi lasts four years. The Ministry recommends that each of the 65 schools allocates eight 40-minute periods per week to the teaching of English, and this is generally followed.

The Malawi Government Junior Certificate of Education is taken at the end of the second year. The Ministry of Education is responsible for the syllabus. Junior Certificate English consists of four papers: I. Composition; II. Structure and Grammar; III. Comprehension and Literature; IV. Aural. A pass in the Junior Certificate examination is the normal qualification for promotion to Form III of the secondary school. This examination is also the normal minimum qualification for entry to T3 Training Colleges.

The Malawi Certificate of Education Examination (MCE) is taken at the end of the fourth year. It is the joint responsibility of the MCE Examination Board in Malawi and AEB in Britain. There are four papers for the English examination: 1. Aural English, 2. Composition, 3. Comprehension, Summary, Grammar and Usage; and 4. Reading in English. All papers are now set and marked locally. The MCE English Syllabus and Statement of Objectives were prepared by a special English Syllabus Committee consisting of Ministry officials and University and Secondary School representatives responsible to the MCE Examination Board.

The MCE Reading in English paper, originally intended to encourage breadth of reading rather than depth, is now closer to the traditional English Literature paper, although some questions inviting an imaginative or personal response are asked. Five books - there is no choice in the matter of selection - have to be studied in some depth. The latest title to be added, which will clearly cause teaching problems, given the limited time available, is The Merchant of Venice.

An MCE with a credit in English is a recommended qualification for entrance to the three senior colleges of the University - Bunda College of Agriculture, the Polytechnic and Chancellor College. An examination pass in English is essential to gain an MCE Certificate - the passport to all forms of higher study.

The Inspector of English, aided by the Adviser in English (an OSAS post), is responsible for the inspection of English in all secondary schools and teacher-training institutions. The job also involves advice on training, ELT methods, syllabus revision and textbook writing. Teams of from two to six subject inspectors visit all secondary schools at least once every two years.

There is no provision at the secondary level for teaching English for such special purposes as science or technology. One private secondary school orientates some of its English towards the needs of secretaries.

Primary Teacher Training The three types of primary teachers' colleges admit both T2 students (with MCE, usually after four years of secondary school) and T3 students (with Junior Certificate, taken either after two years of secondary school or externally); and two small grant-aided colleges take T3 students only. There are plans for three more Government Colleges. A programme of teacher upgrading is operated at Domasi In-Service Training Centre, which is currently being developed into a full Institute of Education.

The time allocated to the teaching of English per week in colleges varies but the average is seven forty minute periods given up to study and teaching methods but with a slight preponderance to the former. Literature is not separately taught. Many colleges encourage extensive reading, but this is incorporated into the English Language schemes of work.

T2 and T3 students alike follow a two-year course, training to teach in any standard of the primary school. There is no infant specialisation. At the end of the course either the T2 or the T3 Teachers' Certificate Examination is taken. Both examinations follow an identical pattern as far as English is concerned, the papers being Aural English, Structures, Comprehension, Composition, and English Methods.

In addition, all trainees have to pass a practical teaching test. The students' ability being assessed by a visiting Moderating Panel, in conjunction with the college's own gradings. The status of qualified T2 or T3 teachers is conferred only on those who pass in the written examinations and the practical teaching test. Referred students may re-take all or part of these examinations in the following year.

The Ministry is responsible for the T2 and T3 syllabuses; the present syllabus were drawn up by the former English Language Centre, which also produced an English Methods Teaching Syllabus as a guide for TTC tutors in English Methods. It consists of 150 suggested lesson plans spread over the two-year course. Both Language and Methods syllabuses are at present under revision.

The responsibilities and organisation of the Inspectorate for the primary teachers colleges follow the lines detailed in the preceding section on secondary schools, though the colleges are inspected less frequently. At present there is no provision for the teaching of English for Special Purposes at this level. However, in future, greater emphasis is likely

to be placed on spoken English, as it is felt that many primary school teachers do not provide an adequate model for their pupils. All three T2 colleges have a language laboratory to help in this work.

University The University of Malawi consists of three constituent colleges: Chancellor College, the Polytechnic, and Bunda College of Agriculture. Chancellor College offers a four-year General Degree course in arts, science, social science and public administration. Bunda offers a 5-year Degree course in Agriculture. Both these colleges also offer three-year Diploma courses. The Polytechnic also offers three-year Diploma courses; it is at present completing its first degree course in Commerce and beginning a BSc course in Engineering.

All first-year students follow a common course in English, which currently has three hours of literature (generally taught with language needs in mind), two hours of comprehension, and one hour of study skills. General Degree students take a programme in which there is a strong concern for language and literature alike. A steadily increasing element of language work is being introduced which is based on modern linguistic theory.

At the Polytechnic, the old Department of English and Liberal Studies has now been replaced by the Department of Language and Communication. The old syllabuses have been replaced by more relevant syllabuses on Basic Writing, Institutionalised Writing, Study Skills, Oral Production and a number of aspects of communication related to the present and future needs of students. English is taught and examined as a subject within all Diploma courses, and students, whatever their main technical or commercial subject, spend from three to five hours a week on Language and Communication studies. The Polytechnic also runs a Diploma in Technical Education, with Language and Communication as a subsidiary subject. The Language and Communication component is well taught, with an emphasis on methodology, discourse analysis and interpersonal interaction.

English is also compulsory, with three to five hours a week for all Degree and Diploma students at Bunda College of Agriculture.

At both institutions the courses are now aimed at developing skills in using English for Special Purposes - technical/commercial, agricultural etc. An important new development is the creation of the English Language Unit, which will meet not only the needs of the University but also, it is hoped, those of the country as a whole. This project has already attracted strong Government backing. The Unit has a separate identity from existing departments and is now manned by three KELT officers and six other staff, two of whom are Malawians.

The Faculty of Education is the only institution in the country training secondary school teachers. It offers courses at three levels: Diploma, BEd, and the University Certificate of Education (UCE). Syllabuses for the courses aim at striking a satisfactory balance between literature and language. There is a strong emphasis on language and methodology, with an important literature component (amounting to approximately 25% of the total course time). The English courses in the Faculty of Education are divided into two categories: Special Courses for pre-service training of teachers of English, and General Courses for pre-service training of teachers of other subjects through English. English courses are compulsory for all Diploma students. At present students who go on to take the BEd course at the end of their third year

may either drop English completely or specialise in it. Those who so specialise take an additional link course which covers such areas as the nature of language, language acquisition and learning, and methodology. This pattern is under review. Alternatively at BEd level, with some subject combinations, English may be taken as a subsidiary subject. The University Certificate of Education provides a one year course designed for graduates who have no professional qualification nor experience of teaching.

Syllabuses and the choice of course books are the responsibility of the departments within the colleges, but the syllabuses are subject to final ratification by Senate. Both Degree and Diploma examinations are set internally by individuale colleges; papers and written scripts are moderated by an external examiner. The weight attached to final examination results, as opposed to continuous assessments, varies. At the Polytechnic the students' final grades in Language and Communication are based mainly on continuous assessment; at Chancellor they depend mainly on final examinations. All students in all colleges must perform adequately in their first-year English studies if they are to proceed to the second and subsequent years of study. In the final Diploma examinations, whether in Engineering, Public Administration, Education or Agriculture, students must perform adequately in English before being awarded a Diploma.

Other Post-secondary Education and Adult Education At the Polytechnic, in addition to the University Diploma courses, there are also Board of Governors courses, administered jointly by the University and Government. These consist of full-time Apprentice courses (printing, welding etc) and Certificate courses (typist and secretarial) for students with Junior Certificate qualifications or MCE. They are given four hours a week tuition in remedial and specialised English.

The Polytechnic organises evening classes for adults outside the University wishing to take English at Junior Certificate and Malawi Certificate of Education level.

The Malawi Correspondence College, run by the Ministry of Education, provides preparatory courses for Junior Certificate and Malawi MCE examinations. Those taking these courses are generally candidates who failed to get a place in secondary school, but many of them are adult. They attend one of the 58 Day Centres or 19 Night Secondary Schools in the country.

3. Teachers of English

Existing Staff In 1979 there were 12,218 teachers in the formal education sector, of whom 11,425 taught at primary and 793 at secondary level. Of primary teachers 11% are T2 teachers (MCE + 2 years professional training), 42% are T3 teachers (JCE + 2 years), 21% T4 teachers (PSLC + 2 years), and 26% unqualified teachers. The last category includes former T5 teachers (Standard V + 2 years). The T3 qualification is the minimum acceptable qualification for teaching at this level, and the upgrading programme is intended to phase out the lower categories gradually. At secondary level the majority of teachers possess the Diploma or T2 qualifications and a small minority the University Certificate of Education or Bachelorship of Education. The shortage of teachers can be measured by the high pupil/teacher ratio which varies considerably among the 24 districts but averages 1 : 62

in government-assisted primary schools. At the secondary and TTC level, class sizes are generally acceptable. However, key post teachers under the BESS suplementation scheme can be recruited for non-governmental institutions and a total of 15 such English teachers were at post in 1981. There is also the KELT scheme for the recruitment of English 'course development' staff for the Government TTC's and the University. The actual numbers of teachers of English in Secondary Schools, TTCs and the University are as follows:

Secondary Schools

Total no. of schools	Local staff	Expatriate British	Expatriate Other	TOTAL
65	101	33	22	156

The figure for local staff is approximate since many teachers teach other subjects as well as English.

The 33 British expatriate staff are made up of 15 BESS teachers, 13 wives and 5 missionaries. The other expatriate staff are mainly missionaries but include 4 teachers sent by the World University Service of Canada.

Primary teacher training colleges

Total no. of colleges	Local staff	Expatriate British	Expatriate Other	TOTAL
5	17	5	2	24

University

	Local Staff in Situ	Local Staff on Study Leave	Expatriate British	Expatriate Other	ELU	TOTAL
Chancellor College	2	9	6	-	5	22
Polytechnic	5	2	-	1	1	9
Bunda College of Agric.	-	3	-	-	1	4
KCN	-	-	1	-	1	2
Poly. Board of Governors	3	2	1	1	-	7

These figures show a marked trend towards localisation in recent years, though, with the exception of the University, numbers and levels of competence are still inadequate. The tendency is for the best teachers to move from schools to the University. Promotional mobility perpetuates a constant shortage at secondary level.

Teacher training Primary school teachers are trained in three Government Teachers' Colleges and two smaller mission-operated institutions. Qualitatively only 53% of teachers meet minimum requirements (T2 or T3)'; while quantitatively output from the colleges falls so far below the requirements of the expanding primary system. In 1980/81, 194 T2 and 553 T3 teachers will be produced, while about 80 were upgraded to this level through in-service training at Domasi.

By the time they have reached T2/T3 level teachers will have received all their education through the medium of English from Standard 5 at primary level. In addition English will have figured as the predominant academic subject throughout their studies - 9, 8 and 7 periods out of a possible 45 per week at primary, secondary and teacher training college level respectively. The subject is taken seriously both as a result of top level exhortations and the fact that failure at JC or MCE level is an absolute bar to further academic promotion. By the standards of comparable countries the general level of attainment is respectable. The chief weaknesses are the large numbers of inadequately trained T4 and T5 teachers, the generally conservative methods of teaching, and the shortage of books and materials. The chief contribution of British expatriate staff in the augmented recruitment programme now proposed will be in developing new materials and courses and introducing new methodology.

The training of secondary school teachers is the responsibility of the University Faculty of Education. Three courses are offered and the number specialising in English in 1978-79 is as follows:

	Diploma	BEd	Univ. Certificate
2nd year	..... 22		n.a.
3rd year	4	6	n.a.
4th year		9	nil

In addition, a new mature entry scheme was initiated in 1978-79 as an emergency measure to expand dramatically the output of secondary school teachers. This will provide a Special Diploma in Education after two years' training. Currently seventy-eight students of this enrolment are specialising in English.

Professional organisations The Association for the Teaching of English in Malawi (ATEM) is a professional organisation for teachers of English. It organises an Annual Schools Drama Festival, and there are fairly active branches in the Southern and Central Regions which hold occasional meetings usually in the form of a lecture from a visiting speaker. ATEM also produces an occasional Newsletter.

4. Materials support

Teaching aids and textbooks are in short supply in most primary schools. However, the situation is being alleviated under the World Bank Primary Textbook scheme, by which each pupil will be supplied with a textbook for English, Chichewa and Arithmetic. Standards 1 to 5 have already received their textbooks and Standards 6 to 8 will receive theirs in 1982. Furthermore, there is a commitment by the Malawi Government to spend (at today's prices) K1.5m a year, quite separate from school fees, on topping up primary textbooks. There should, therefore, soon be a notable improvement in this area.

Improvement in the supply of teaching aids will also be helped by the fact that in 1980 the Ministry of Education took over the collection of primary school fees from Local Councils. Quite a number of schools (between 40% and 90% according to the District) possess radio sets, but not all of them work. The Malawi Correspondence College and the Schools Broadcasting Unit provide weekly broadcasts on the English syllabus at JC, MCE and Teacher Training level.

However, the problem of insufficient textbooks and teaching aids is not only a matter of cost but also of poor supply. Books and materials are purchased abroad for secondary schools or from local commercial publishers for primary schools at relatively high prices. Also, materials ordered abroad may take up to a year to reach the schools. A local publishing and materials production unit is needed.

Schools at primary level use the recommended English in Malawi course published by Dzuka. It consists of eight pupils' books and eight teachers' books; it is being extensively revised. Supplementary readers are advocated, but few schools possess any. At primary level the lack of other materials such as reading cards, charts etc is particularly universal.

At secondary level, most schools use for at least some of their work one of two course books recommended by the Ministry:

Forms 1 and 2	McAdam's Foundation Secondary English
Forms 1 to 4	Ogundipe and Tregidgo's Practical English

Much dissatisfaction has been expressed with McAdam's book, which might be removed from the recommended list.

At primary teacher training, the colleges are fairly well equipped in regard to basic textbooks and supplementary readers. At T3 level, Ogundipe and Tregidgo's book is generally used, though at the T2 a really satisfactory course book is unavailable and colleges tend to use a variety of supplementary books. With the projected recruitment of KELT staff it is hoped to standardise syllabuses and recommended textbooks.

Three colleges of the University are very well equipped with textbooks and other ELT material, though at Bunda and the Polytechnic there is a strong development in the design of special English courses for particular needs. The fourth college, Kamuzu College of Nursing, opened in 1980, still lacks a properly designed Language course, but the English Language Unit is now assisting in this area, and a teacher in English Language has been appointed there. As each college is responsible for the selection of books, the general pattern is one of great diversity, and it is impossible to determine which textbooks are most widely used. Both Chancellor College and the Polytechnic possess language laboratories whose importance will be enhanced by the increased emphasis now placed on ELT and ESP work. A large number of commercially and internally produced tapes are in use, dealing with intonation patterns, structures and specialised English.

7. English outside the Education System

There are no private commercial colleges in Malawi, though the Rapid Results College has an office in Blantyre. Special provision is made for African students studying English Language.

8. British support for the teaching of English

There are KELT lecturers at each of the three Government Teachers' Colleges and at three of the University Colleges. There is one OSAS post (Adviser in English) at Ministry Headquarters. Other posts at the University (3), Teachers' College (1) and secondary schools (15) are filled under BESS.

There is also a small VSO presence in secondary schools, with three volunteers involved in English teaching. A VSO English Language Editor is expected at the Malawi Correspondence College.

10. Other agency support

Since 1980 a small number of teachers have been supplied by the World University Service of Canada. Four of these are teaching English in secondary schools and two at Chancellor College.

There are at present no American Peace Corps teachers in Malawi. A request has been made for some Peace Corps teachers to come in 1982, but English was not specified as a main subject requirement.

13. Current research

There is no recently completed research worthy of record.

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15. General statement

Standards of English in Malawi are comparatively high and are likely to remain so in the foreseeable future. There is no general problem of intelligibility, and nothing that could be called a local variety of English is developing. Indeed, any such tendency is strongly opposed by the authorities, with the lead being given by the Life President himself, and 'Correct English' in schools is insisted on. Coupled with this is the place that English enjoys in the educational system: it is the medium of instruction from Standard 5 and, in the highly competitive selection for secondary and tertiary education, results in English are all-important. It is not therefore surprising that English enjoys a high status in Malawi and people take a pride in speaking it well.

Teaching methods tend to be traditional and certain 'progressive' methods of language teaching are actively discouraged. Analytical grammar is taught both in primary and in secondary schools at the insistence of the Life President. There is a current trend towards a traditional 'English Literature' approach to the reading element in the secondary English syllabus, and this may lead to a separate English Literature paper being introduced at MCE level.

At the primary level, the strengths include a sound 8 year primary school-English course which has been specially written for Malawi and a fairly adequate supply of these books in schools. Weaknesses include oversize classes, inadequately qualified teachers, a high drop-out rate (especially in the early years) and a high repeater rate in Standard 8.

The secondary system works fairly well, with satisfactory syllabuses and sufficient textbooks. Well-qualified teachers, especially graduates, are in short supply, and there is still a heavy reliance on expatriate teachers of English. A programme to increase the number of secondary-school places very substantially is under way, and this will inevitably introduce strains

in the system. In particular, the quality of teachers produced by the special crash courses mounted at Chancellor College has yet to be assessed; their English is likely to be of a lower standard than that of the normal Diploma teacher.

Primary Teacher Education is currently benefiting from a well-designed KELT programme which should result in 1982 in a new integrated (language and methods) syllabus and related teaching materials.

At University level the most interesting development is the establishment in 1980 of an English Language Unit designed to service the English Language needs of the University as a whole.